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Soviets Would Add Arms Without Treaty, Hill Told

Testimony Counters SALT's Critics

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A top intelligence officer told a Senate hearing yesterday that the Soviet Union would increase the number of warheads on its nuclear missiles if unconstrained by the unratified SALT II treaty with the United States.

The testimony of Lawrence K. Gershwin, national intelligence officer for strategic programs at the National Intelligence Council, conflicts with the views of SALT II critics in the Reagan administration who express doubts that the Soviet Union would increase its nuclear warheads even if the treaty lapsed because Moscow already enjoys a large strategic edge over the United States.

Asked by Sen. Dan Quayle (R-Ind.) if there would be a "significant difference" in the number of warheads deployed by Moscow in the absence of SALT II, Gershwin replied, "There would be some difference and that's clear."

He cited the case of the SSX25 mobile, single-warhead missile now being prepared for deployment in the Soviet Union. Moscow, he said, has "certain potential" to arm the

missile with multiple warheads if not for limits imposed by SALT II.

President Reagan announced June 10 that the United States would continue to comply fully with the treaty, siding with advisers who argued that abandoning SALT II would benefit Moscow more than Washington. Each superpower has

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said it will avoid undercutting the SALT II treaty as long as the other does the same.

Gershwin and Robert M. Gates, deputy intelligence director for the Central Intelligence Agency, testified before a joint session of two Senate defense subcommittees called to review an unusual report on Soviet strategic developments prepared by the two officials.

The report, which concluded that the Soviet Union is poised for a ma-

for expansion-of-offensive nuclear weapons and defensive systems, was derived from the usually classified National Intelligence Estimate.

Parts of the estimate were declassified for public release yesterday at the request of the White House. Republican senators, frustrated over cuts in the administration's defense budget, had urged Reagan to release intelligence findings to document the extent of the Soviet threat, according to Senate sources.

The public appearance of intelligence officers who normally testify in closed sessions became an issue at yesterday's hearing, with Democratic senators calling the move politically motivated and Republicans defending it as a way of keeping the public informed.

Sen. Gary Hart (D-Colo.) criticized the administration for "making partisan and ideological what is central to the national security." Sen. William Proxmire (D-Wis.) said the hearing "seems to have more of a political than intelligence purpose" and asked Gates if his appearance did not "compromise the CIA's credibility."

Gates, saying he would not "address motives of the White House," replied that professional intelligence officers "face somewhat of a dilemma."

"We're fully aware of the dangers of a public presentation to the integrity and objectivity of our assessments," he said. "We also recognize the value of making available on a broad basis a commonly agreed set of facts for discussion of Soviet strategic force development."